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Letter dated 4 October 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the Ministerial Declaration adopted at the forty-second annual meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the States members of the Group of 77, held at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 27 September 2018 (see annex).

On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, I would appreciate your having the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 9, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29, 38, 39, 43, 47, 58, 64, 68, 71, 72, 73, 75, 78, 81, 88, 119, 123, 125, 126, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 143 and 149.

(*Signed*) Mohamed Fathi Ahmed **Edrees**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations
Chair of the Group of 77

Annex to the letter dated 4 October 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

FORTY-SECOND ANNUAL MEETING OF MINISTERS FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE GROUP OF 77
New York, 27 September 2018

MINISTERIAL DECLARATION

1. The Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the States members of the Group of 77 and China met at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 27 September 2018, on the occasion of their forty-second annual meeting. The Ministers reviewed the world economic situation, the recent developments in the world and the particular challenges faced by developing countries in the economic, social and environmental areas, recognizing that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, remains the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, and adopted the following Declaration.

2. The Ministers reaffirmed full respect for the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, particularly as they relate to equality among States, respect for the independence of States, national sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of States, and stress that those principles and purposes inspire our full commitment to multilateralism and the search for a more just and equitable international economic system that offers opportunities to raise the standard of living of our peoples.

3. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of building a culture of peace by strengthening multilateralism and developing friendly relations among nations, based on international law, dialogue, respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and of taking other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace and the fulfilment, promotion and protection of all human rights including the right to development. They recognized that peace not only is the absence of conflict, but also requires a positive, dynamic participatory process where dialogue is encouraged and conflicts are solved in a spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation. They reaffirmed that there can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.

4. The Ministers reiterated that poverty eradication in all its forms and dimensions is a central imperative of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and emphasized the need to address poverty in all its forms and dimensions in order to truly leave no one behind, focused in particular on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable. In this regard, they reaffirmed their commitment to work tirelessly for the full implementation of this agenda by 2030 in a balanced and integrated manner to achieve sustainable development in its three dimensions and building on the achievements and lessons learned of the MDGs and seeking to address their unfinished business. In this regard, the Ministers emphasized that the international community must address the challenges and needs faced by developing countries, especially countries in special situations, in particular, African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States as well as specific challenges faced by many middle-income countries, conflict and post-conflict countries and countries and peoples living under foreign occupation.

5. The Ministers noted that three years have passed since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and that significant effort is being exerted on implementing the Agenda. However, they acknowledged that the pace of

implementation is still quite distant from achieving sustainable development for all, in particular for the poorest and most vulnerable. They reiterated the continued unwavering commitment of the Group of 77 to further translating ambitions set out in the Agenda into real action. Further support is needed from developed countries especially regarding the transfer of technology, capacity building and financing to developing countries.

6. The Ministers stressed the need to enhance capacity-building at all levels as an essential prerequisite to achieving sustainable development and poverty eradication. In this regard, we call upon developed countries to step up support to developing countries in order to help them fulfill their capacity- building gap.

7. The Ministers also noted that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development reaffirms all the principles of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992, in particular the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. They further reaffirmed that the implementation of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development should be guided by the principles in accordance with paragraph 74 of the 2030 Agenda.

8. The Ministers underlined the importance of comprehensive follow-up and review at the global level, as well as the regional level as appropriate, in order to assess progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, ensuring that its overall objectives of poverty eradication in all its forms and dimensions and achieving sustainable development are duly attained. In this regard, they took note of General Assembly resolution 70/299 of 29 July 2016 on the Follow-up and Review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the Global Level which underscores the shared vision and aspiration of all Member States and State Members for the crucial path set forth to assess progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. They reiterated and reaffirmed that the implementation and the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda must include and address the severe difficulties faced by countries and peoples living under colonial and foreign occupation and strive to remove the obstacles to their full realization of the right of self-determination and right to development, which adversely affect their economic and social development, as well as their environment and their ability to achieve the sustainable development goals and to ensure that they will not be left behind.

9. The Ministers reaffirmed that the high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF) was mandated to provide political leadership, guidance and recommendations for the implementation of sustainable development commitments and that it has a central role in overseeing a network of follow-up and review processes of the 2030 Agenda at the global level, working coherently with the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and other relevant organs and forums, in line with existing mandates. They took note that this year's theme of the HLPF was "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies". The Ministers commended all the countries that presented voluntary national reviews to highlight the steps taken to implement the 2030 Agenda at the 2018 HLPF. The Ministers looked forward to the 2019 HLPFs to be convened under the auspices of the General Assembly and the ECOSOC, rounding up the first four-year cycle of the HLPF.

10. The Ministers firmly believe that all states and stakeholders should devote ourselves collectively to the pursuit of "win-win" cooperation for global development on the basis of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits, which can bring huge gains to all countries and all parts of the world in building a community of shared future for humankind.

11. The Ministers stressed that Financing for development is key to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They highlighted the importance of assessing progress, identifying obstacles and challenges to the

implementation of the financing for development outcomes, addressing new and emerging topics of relevance to the implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda as the need arises, and providing policy recommendations for action by the international community, in particular regarding the support of developed countries for developing countries. The Ministers therefore welcomed the third ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development, a crucial platform for financing for development, which was held from 23 to 26 April 2018 and called for the implementation of its intergovernmentally agreed conclusions and recommendations. The Ministers looked forward to the fourth ECOSOC FfD Forum and the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development to be convened under the General Assembly in 2019.

12. The Ministers recognized that the world faces many challenges and risks that could hinder achievement of the 2030 Agenda. Cyclical upturn disguise significant weaknesses and medium-term risks. The increase in the protectionist measures, a disorderly tightening of financial conditions, the adoption of inward-looking policies and debt vulnerabilities as well as escalation of geopolitical tensions could disrupt development progress. Persistently high levels of inequality pose a challenge to robust growth and sustainable development. Declining private investment in infrastructure indicates inability to sufficiently align investment with long-term sustainable development. The Ministers stressed that those challenges should be addressed through our collective endeavors with a view to identifying the means to accelerate the pace of progress toward achieving the 2030 Agenda. They reiterated that appropriate emphasis has to be placed on an enabling global environment and global partnership for development, balanced against the increasing emphasis being placed on domestic resource mobilization.

13. The Ministers stressed that implementing the 2030 Agenda at all levels requires provision of means of implementation, a revitalized global partnership and the full implementation of SDG 17. They reiterated that a stronger commitment to partnership and cooperation is needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. That effort will require coherent policies and an enabling environment for sustainable development at all levels and by all actors. The Ministers expressed their deep concern about the significant impacts of the current challenging global environment on national efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda, including not only economic factors such as difficult macroeconomic conditions, low commodity prices, subdued trade growth and volatile capital flows, but also natural disasters, climate change, environmental degradation, humanitarian crises and conflicts. The Ministers stressed the need for concrete and immediate action to create the necessary enabling environment at all levels for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. They emphasized that the scale and level of ambition of the 2030 Agenda require strengthening and promoting effective and transparent multi-stakeholder partnerships. They also stressed that both public and private investment have key roles to play in infrastructure financing, including through development banks, development finance institutions and tools and mechanisms such as public-private partnerships.

14. The Ministers called on the United Nations system, in consultation with the international financial institutions, to develop transparent measurements of progress on sustainable development that go beyond per capita income, building on existing initiatives as appropriate. These should recognize the multidimensional nature of poverty and the social, economic and environmental dimensions of domestic output and structural gaps at all levels. In this regard, the Ministers underscored the importance of achieving concrete progress in this issue.

15. The Ministers stressed that Official Development Assistance (ODA) is key and indispensable for achieving sustainable development goals. It is the main channel for international cooperation and will continue to remain so. They expressed concern that net Official Development Assistance decreased 0.6 per cent in real terms in 2017 from

2016. And they noted that donor countries have shift more ODA resources to funds for hosting and processing refugees within donor countries themselves in recent years. This shift in ODA resources towards humanitarian and crisis situations is not consistent with long-term and sustainable approach to financing development needed to achieve 2030 Agenda targets. The Ministers were concerned by the failure to increase concessional finance to the countries most in need as well as the decline in the share of ODA over which recipient countries have a significant say. In this context, the Ministers reaffirmed that ODA should be aligned with national priorities and development strategies of the recipient countries.

16. The Ministers reaffirmed that international development cooperation and official development assistance (ODA) are essential for sustainable development. They are the main channels for international cooperation and will continue to remain so. They expressed regret that ODA in 2017 has fallen by 0.6% from 2016 after remaining flat for the previous 6 years, as well as noted the increasing shift of ODA resources towards crisis situations which is not consistent with a sustainable approach to development. They expressed concern that this situation promotes reactionary tendencies and lacks the very long-term mindset needed in the approach to financing development and achieving the SDGs. The Ministers expressed their concern that, notwithstanding the increase in ODA in the past decade, it was, on average, 0.31 per cent of the aggregate donor gross national income in 2014, well below the commitment of 0.7 per cent. They also emphasized the importance of the commitments by ODA providers to achieve the national target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income and 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of ODA/GNI to the least developed countries. The Ministers reiterated their call that developed countries deliver on their commitments in relation to ODA to developing countries.

17. The Ministers reaffirmed the paramount importance of ODA in supporting the sustainable development needs of developing countries, in particular African countries, the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, middle-income countries and countries in conflict, post-conflict situations and countries and people under foreign occupation. In that regard, developed countries must uphold their ODA commitments, in keeping with their previous undertakings, and to scale up those efforts to play a meaningful role in eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions.

18. The Ministers reiterated that ODA can help catalyze additional resource mobilization from other sources, public and private. They stressed that ODA can support improved tax collection and help to strengthen domestic enabling environments and build essential public services and can also be used to unlock additional finance, including through blended or pooled financing and risk mitigation, notably for infrastructure and other investments that support private sector development. In the same vein, they stressed the importance of mobilizing domestic resources to support science, technology and innovation, which needs to be reinforced by an enabling global environment.

19. The Ministers reiterated that international development cooperation, especially North-South cooperation, remains a fundamental catalyst to sustainable development. As North-South cooperation is the main channel of development financing, the international community must uphold the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities" (CBDR) and push North-South cooperation to continue to play its key role. Developed countries should bear the primary responsibility in financing for development. They urged developed countries to fulfil their unmet ODA commitments.

20. The Ministers stressed the importance of national policies and development strategies, while respecting each country's policy space, priorities and leadership to

implement policies for poverty eradication and sustainable development; and the need for an enabling international economic environment, including coherent and mutually supporting world trade, monetary and financial systems, and strengthened and enhanced global economic governance.

21. The Ministers reaffirmed the central role of WTO in today's global economy. They also reaffirmed that the WTO provides the multilateral framework of rules governing international trade relations, an essential mechanism for preventing and resolving trade disputes, and a forum for addressing trade related issues that affect all WTO members. They remained firmly committed to a rules-based, transparent, non-discriminatory, open and inclusive multilateral trading system as embodied in the WTO. The Ministers further reaffirmed their commitments to ensure full implementation and enforcement of existing WTO rules and are determined to work together to further strengthen the WTO. They maintained that a successful conclusion of the Doha Development Round launched in 2001 can only be achieved if the outcomes thereof, significantly address the imbalances and inequities in the multilateral trading system. It is a matter of deep concern that the Doha Development Agenda, which aims at addressing the systemic imbalances in the multilateral trading system and ensuring more integration of the developing countries in international trade, has not been concluded. Furthermore, in the spirit of globalization and interdependence, the Ministers reiterated the need to achieve an outcome that strengthens the multilateral trading system under the WTO and continue to fight all forms of protectionism.

22. The Ministers emphasized that international trade is an engine for inclusive economic growth and poverty eradication as well as an important source to finance development and achieving sustainable development. In this context, the Ministers stressed the significance of the principle of special and differential treatment for developing countries in harnessing the developmental benefit of international trade. The issues of particular concern to developing countries should be addressed, especially as related to sectors of special interest to them with a view to enhance their capacities to finance development and to diversify their economies.

23. The Ministers expressed their deep concern with the increase in the unilateral and protectionist measures that will not only undermine the multilateral trading system, but also will lead to negative impact on access of the developing countries' exports to the global markets. They stressed that the World Trade Organization is the appropriate forum for setting the norms of international trade. In this regard, they encouraged WTO to strengthen the developmental component within its architecture, taking into account the need to conclude Doha Development round at the WTO. The Ministers reaffirmed that the WTO dispute settlement system is a cornerstone of the multilateral trading system and promotes predictability in international trade. They noted with concern the impasse in the selection process for new Appellate Body Members that can paralyze the dispute settlement system and undermine the rights and obligations of all Members, and therefore urged all Members to engage constructively to address this challenge as a matter of priority.

24. The Ministers emphasized the importance of facilitating the accession of developing countries to WTO, recognizing the contribution that this would make to the rapid and full integration of those countries into the multilateral trading system. In that regard, they urged the accession process to be accelerated without political impediments and in an expeditious and transparent manner for developing countries that had applied for membership in WTO and reaffirmed the importance of the Organization's decision of 25 July 2012 on accession by the least developed countries.

25. The Ministers stressed that emerging debt challenges and vulnerabilities have intensified across developing countries since 2017. Several developing countries are fiscally constrained in generating resources needed for implementation of 2030 Agenda due to their debt burdens. Many natural resources producing countries have seen rapid debt accumulation as governments have attempted to cushion the shock from falling commodity prices. Strains are also evident in several countries experiencing conflicts or political unrest, and in some small island developing states (SIDS), which remain vulnerable to natural disasters. In this context, risks of a potential renewed cycle of debt crises and economic disruption, pose severe challenge to the achievement of the SDGs. The Ministers underlined the need to explore the means and instruments needed to achieve debt sustainability as well as the necessary measures to reduce the indebtedness of the developing countries.

26. The Ministers stressed that the private sector should contribute in mobilizing resources needed to finance sustainable development. They emphasized the need for accountability and transparency as well as the commitment towards a long-term approach.

27. The Ministers called on the international community to align financial markets with sustainable development. They underlined that States should demonstrate their willingness to implement the commitments they have made, both in the national and international levels, in order to create the necessary conditions and the enabling environment for private resources to be adequately channeled towards long-term sustainable development goals. Foreign direct investment must be increased and become more long-term oriented and aligned with national development priorities to support developing countries in implementing the SDGs.

28. The Ministers recalled that the 2008 world financial and economic crisis highlighted the regulatory gaps in the international financial system. The structural reform of the international financial system and the relevant institutions is urgently needed to avoid recurrence of crises that could have severe negative impacts on the economies of the developing countries.

29. Moreover, they reiterated the prerequisite to make the international financial system and the relevant institutions more responsive to the needs and concerns of developing countries including broadening and strengthening the participation in the global economic governance and the international economic decision-making.

30. The Ministers underlined that while developing countries seeks to maximize their domestic public resources in order to achieve 2030 Agenda, through broadening the tax base, there is a need to continue addressing the international dimension of taxation. Furthermore, ODA in support of domestic resource mobilization remains small. In this regard, the Ministers called on the developed countries to continue to increase their contributions to revenue mobilization capacity building of the developing countries.

31. The Ministers reiterated the need to strengthen international cooperation on tax matters, recognizing with concern that there is still no single global inclusive forum for international tax cooperation at the intergovernmental level. In that regard, they reiterated the need to fully upgrade the Committee of Experts in Tax Matters to an intergovernmental body with experts representing their respective governments. The Ministers stressed that the most relevant issues are the challenges posed by the lack of international tax cooperation, the existing illicit financial flows and tax evasion. They reiterated that appropriate emphasis must be placed on an enabling global environment and global partnership for development, balanced against the increased emphasis being placed on domestic resource mobilization. In this regard, the continued relevance and necessity of capacity building in the area of tax matters cannot be overstated. They underlined that it is counterproductive to highlight the

importance of domestic resource mobilization in developing countries, while at the same time not robustly tackle areas that impede their ability to capture necessary resources.

32. The Ministers stressed that developing countries should attach importance to scaling up international tax cooperation and combating illicit financial flows in order to mobilize domestic resources for the Sustainable Development Goals. The Ministers stressed the importance of eliminating safe havens that create incentives for the transfer abroad of stolen assets and illicit financial flows. They reiterated their commitment to working to strengthen regulatory frameworks at all levels to further increase transparency and the accountability of financial institutions, the corporate sector and public administrations. The Ministers reaffirmed that they would strengthen international cooperation and national institutions to combat money-laundering and the financing of terrorism.

33. The Ministers noted with appreciation that, in response to the call of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Republic of India has made a voluntary contribution in second successive year to the Trust Fund for International Cooperation in Tax Matters, the only such contribution since its establishment and reiterated their appeal to Member States, relevant organizations and other potential donors to consider contributing generously to the Trust Fund for International Cooperation in Tax Matters established by the Secretary-General in order to supplement regular budgetary resources, and invited the Secretary-General to intensify efforts to that end.

34. The Ministers noted with concern the steady increase in the illicit flow of funds, particularly from developing countries, and the negative impact it poses with respect to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals, the rule of law and the security of nations. The Ministers recognized that States continue to face challenges in the recovery of assets owing to, inter alia, differences in legal systems, the complexity of multijurisdictional investigation and prosecution, divergent interpretations of the provisions of the Convention, lack of familiarity with the mutual legal assistance procedures of other States parties and difficulties in identifying and exposing the flow of the proceeds of corruption. The Ministers expressed concern that a large proportion of the proceeds of corruption, including those emanating from transnational bribery-related cases, have yet to be returned to the countries of origin.

35. The Ministers urged all Member States to scale up the level of cooperation to curb illicit financial flows and recover the proceeds of crime, including embezzled public funds, stolen assets and unaccounted-for assets that are found in safe havens, and to demonstrate strong commitment to ensuring the return of such assets to the countries of origin. The Ministers also urged the international community to enhance its support for the efforts of Member States to develop and strengthen capacities in various areas, inter alia, their national tax authorities, legal and regulatory institutions, businesses and financial institutions, and for increased public awareness to enhance accountability mechanisms and help to combat illicit financial flows. In addition, the Ministers called upon Member States to consider the possibility of waiving or reducing to the barest minimum the processes and costs of the recovery of assets, in particular by reducing the administrative and legal bottlenecks in the recovery of illicit assets.

36. The Ministers stressed that technology transfer is one of the core priorities of the developing countries in implementing 2030 Agenda. They reiterated the need to accelerate the transfer of technology on favourable terms including on concessional and preferential terms.

37. The Ministers reaffirmed that enhancing capacity building in science, technology and innovation is fundamental for the progress of the developing countries in implementing 2030 Agenda. In this regard, there is an urgent need for allocation of

financing for the fulfillment of the Technology Facilitation Mechanism's (TFM) mandate, including for the operationalization of the online platform as a gateway for information on existing STI initiatives, mechanisms and programs. They recalled that access to high-speed connections remains largely unavailable in the developing countries. In 2016, high-speed fixed broadband penetration reached 6 per cent of the population in developing countries, compared to 24 per cent in developed countries. The Ministers stated that limitations in the capacity and speed of fixed-broadband connections will affect the quality and functionality of this development tool and widen the already existing inequalities.

38. The Ministers recognized that planet Earth and its ecosystems are our home and that "Mother Earth" is a common expression in a number of countries and regions, noting that some countries recognize the rights of nature in the context of the promotion of sustainable development, and expressing the conviction that, in order to achieve a just balance among the economic, social and environmental needs of present and future generations, it is necessary to promote harmony with nature.

39. In this regard, the Ministers welcomed the high-level interactive dialogue on harmony with nature in commemoration of International Mother Earth Day convened by the President of the General Assembly on 23 April 2018 under the theme "Earth Jurisprudence in the implementation of sustainable Production and Consumption Patterns in Harmony with Nature". The Ministers noted that some countries are considering the possibility of making a declaration on the rights of nature. They supported the continuation of the dialogue on harmony with nature in the future recognizing the need to mobilize financial resources, including to the Voluntary Trust Fund established for that purpose and to achieve sustainable development in harmony with nature.

40. The Ministers recognized the need for a broader and a more people-centred preventive approach to disaster risk and that disaster risk reduction practices need to be multi-hazard and multi-sectoral, inclusive and accessible in order to be efficient and effective. In the regard, the Ministers recalled the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, reaffirming that disaster-prone developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, small island developing States, landlocked developing countries and African countries, as well as middle-income countries facing specific challenges, need particular attention in view of their higher vulnerability and risk levels, which often greatly exceed their capacity to respond to and recover from disasters, and recognizing also that similar attention and appropriate assistance should also be extended to other disaster-prone countries with specific characteristics, such as archipelagic countries, as well as countries with extensive coastlines.

41. The Ministers welcomed the main outcomes of the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly.

42. The Ministers welcomed the adoption of the United Nations Decade of Family Farming (2019–2028), to raise the profile of the role of family farming in contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to the achievement of food security and improved nutrition.

43. The Ministers stressed that climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time and its widespread, unprecedented impacts disproportionately burden all developing countries and in particular the poorest and most vulnerable among them. They recalled that the year 2017 was one of the three warmest years on record and was 1.1 degree Celsius above pre-historical levels. They reiterated the need for an effective and progressive response to the urgent threat of climate change on the basis of the best available scientific knowledge. Welcoming the Paris Agreement and its early entry into force. The Ministers reiterated that the unfinished business of the pre-

2020 actions and ambition, which are long overdue, must be urgently addressed. They stressed the Kyoto Protocol is a fundamental building block in our post-2020 efforts. They urged all Parties that have not done so to ratify the Doha Amendment expeditiously.

44. The Ministers reaffirmed that humanitarian emergencies arising out of natural and man-made disasters and other causes and outbreak of epidemics and other global health threats, deserve to be given the same level of attention as those arising out of armed conflicts. The devastating effects of climate change are real and sudden. Extreme natural disasters can affect the environment, the economy and society and reverse hard-earned developmental gains overnight. The massive humanitarian consequences that follow are even more catastrophic. Millions of lives are lost while many are forcibly displaced and separated from their families. In a similar vein, the devastating humanitarian emergencies resulting from other forced displacement equally deserves the attention of the international community which should spare no effort investing in durable solutions.

45. The Ministers look forward for the full operationalization of the local communities and indigenous peoples platform for the acknowledgement of their valuable voice and support of the spreading of their knowledge in the fight of climate change.

46. The Ministers reaffirmed that the Paris Agreement, adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), was the collective achievement of all Parties, which seeks to enhance the implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in accordance with its objectives, principles and provisions, in particular equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in the light of different national circumstances, and the right to development, in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty. It is also essential to maintain focus on the implementation of existing commitments by developed countries in the pre-2020 period, including the ratification of the Doha amendment to the Kyoto Protocol. They stressed that global effort to fight climate change is an irreversible process that cannot be overlooked nor postponed. The Ministers also called for increased action to address loss and damage and the adverse effects of climate change from extreme and slow onset events, including through the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts.

47. The Ministers encouraged all parties to fully implement the Paris Agreement and parties of the UNFCCC that have not yet done so to deposit their instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession, where appropriate, as soon as possible. They also highlighted the importance to hold the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, recognizing that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change. Parties aim to reach global peaking of greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible, recognizing that peaking will take longer for developing country Parties, and to undertake rapid reductions thereafter in accordance with best available science, so as to achieve a balance between anthropogenic emissions by sources and removals by sinks of greenhouse gases in the second half of this century, on the basis of equity, and in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty.

48. The Ministers reiterated the importance of preserving the delicate balance of all the issues of the Paris Agreement that was achieved in Paris at COP21, and they noted the significant advancement of the Paris Agreement work program in Marrakesh at COP22 and in Bonn at COP23, as delegations continue the work to develop and agree on the set of decisions for the implementation of the Paris Agreement's various

provisions. They stressed the fact that these outcomes are not to be renegotiated nor reinterpreted, as the process under the Paris Agreement is irreversible. They emphasized the importance of having clear options for textual negotiations at COP24 while maintaining the balance struck in the Paris Agreement between adaptation, mitigation, and means of implementation.

49. The Ministers welcomed the holding of the COP 24 in Katowice, Poland, and stressed the importance of ensuring that the outcome is both fully operationalized and reflects the delicate balance of the Paris Agreement, including issues related to adaptation, mitigation, means of implementation. The Ministers highlighted the importance of reflecting the commitment of all Parties to fully implement the Agreement within their respective responsibilities and capabilities with developed countries taking the lead both on action and support, in line with the UNFCCC.

50. The Ministers called for mobilizing further action and support, in line with the Convention and its Paris Agreement, for climate change adaptation, mitigation, and loss and damage, taking into account the specific needs and special circumstances of developing countries, especially, those particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. They also called for increased efforts to mobilize, and enhance access to, climate finance, including public and private, domestic and international, bilateral and multilateral, as well as alternative sources of finance.

51. The Ministers stressed the importance of provisions of adequate, predictable and sustainable financial resources to developing countries, in line with the Convention and its Paris Agreement, to enhance developing countries actions in mitigation and adaptation, all means of implementation are essential to assist and enable developing parties to make their contributions under the Paris Agreement. Developing countries are already making significant efforts but with more resources they can certainly do more. They reiterated that it is important to move forward towards an agreement in Katowice on the process and modalities for the establishment of a new global goal on finance. The Ministers expressed their deep concern of the shortfalls in resources of the financial mechanism of the UNFCCC, in particular the GCF and the GEF, the Ministers further stressed on importance of finance as a corner stone to ensure the success and effective implementation of the Paris Agreement in particular in relation to enhancing ambition of action, and the urgency of initiating a replenishment process guided by the relevant arrangements between the COPs and the GCF.

52. The Ministers expressed their deep concern on the recent development in some developed countries in relation to fulfilling their commitments under the Paris Agreement, in particular the announcement of withdrawal from the Agreement, they stressed that the global effort to combat climate change is an irreversible process that should not be undermined or weakened, and highlighted the expectation that developed countries should fulfil their leadership role through more ambitious mitigation targets and financial support to developing countries in line with priorities of developing countries.

53. The Ministers emphasized that developed countries shall continue to take the key leading role on mitigation by undertaking and increasing economy-wide absolute emission reduction targets for their pledges and nationally determined contributions (NDCs). For developing countries adaptation to climate change is a priority, and a key component of the implementation of the Paris Agreement. In this regard adequate capacity-building, transfer of technology and financing support for developing countries according to historic responsibilities and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities for climate action is critical and should be based on and respond to national needs, and foster country ownership. The process of capacity-building must be participatory, country-driven, and cross-cutting. Enhanced financial and technological support coupled with knowledge and skills transfer from

developed countries will allow for effective implementation and enhanced ambition of developing countries. Multilaterally agreed modalities are needed to track the delivery of $100 billion per year in climate finance by 2020. Furthermore, additional and scaled up finance that is secure, predictable and sustainable is crucial for developing countries in the post-2020 context. In concrete baseline target for post-2020 financing with progression from $100 billion per year is needed to prevent backsliding and build trust.

54. The Ministers welcomed the upcoming entry into force of the Kigali Amendment and for the upcoming 30th Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, scheduled from 5–9 November 2018 in Quito, Ecuador.

55. The Ministers stressed that climate finance must not be double counted as official development assistance and must therefore be considered as new and additional to such assistance.

56. Ministers reiterated that urgent and significant actions are needed to reduce the degradation of natural habitats, halt the loss of biodiversity, protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species. They urged the international community to strengthen its efforts to halt the biodiversity loss and protect the ecosystems. They welcomed the convening of the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, which will be held in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt on 17–29 November 2018, and encouraged the Conference to take concrete actions to address this situation.

57. The Ministers reaffirmed the necessity of fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources. They welcomed the increase in parties to the Nagoya Protocol up from 96 countries (in 2017) to 105 countries and took note that 50 countries have shared information on their access and benefit-sharing frameworks.

58. The Ministers acknowledged the contribution from indigenous peoples and local communities whose traditional knowledge, including traditional knowledge associated to genetic resources, and practices are relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity.

59. The Ministers expressed their deep concern about the continuous illicit poaching and trafficking of wildlife, with nearly 7,000 species of animals and plants reported in illegal trade, which continues to thwart conservation efforts. Strong international and local action is still needed to curtail the illegal trade in certain species, particularly ivory.

60. The Ministers were deeply concern that bilateral ODA in support of biodiversity in 2016 decreased 21 per cent in real terms over 2015.

61. The Ministers encouraged to use sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, as a tool to foster sustained and inclusive economic growth, social development, environmental protection and the eradication of poverty and hunger, including the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and natural resources and the promotion of investment and entrepreneurship in sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, in accordance with their national development policies and legislation.

62. The Ministers recognized the importance of promoting efforts in the area of ecosystem restoration, as an integral part of the promotion of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda. In this regard, they supported the discussions towards the establishment of a "United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021–2030", as a framework to boost the advancement of existing mandates and commitments in this field.

63. The Ministers expressed their appreciation to the Government of China for hosting the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification particularly in Africa, held in Ordos, China, from 6 to 16 September 2017. They welcomed the outcomes of the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention. They took note with appreciation of the adoption of the Ordos Declaration at the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, which confirm that desertification, land degradation and drought are major environmental, economic and social challenges for global sustainable development.

64. The Ministers expressed their deep concern about the continuous trend of land degradation in which about one fifth of the Earth's land surface covered by vegetation showed persistent and declining trends in productivity. They stressed that in some cases, advanced stages of land degradation are leading to desertification. In this context, it is significant to continue combatting desertification, restoring degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, especially in developing countries.

65. The Ministers recognized sand and dust storms as a serious challenge to sustainable development in the affected countries and regions. They called upon the United Nations system to play its role in advancing international cooperation and support to combat sand and dust storms and invited all relevant bodies, agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations and all other related organizations to integrate into their respective cooperation frameworks and operational programmes measures and actions aimed at combating sand and dust storms, including the following measures: enhancing capacity-building at the national level; the development and implementation of regional and subregional programmes and projects; the sharing of information, best practices and experiences and the transferring of technology; efforts to control and prevent the main factors of sand and dust storms; and the development of early warning systems as tools. They also stressed the importance of addressing the socioeconomic and environmental challenges of the affected countries and of ways to address combating sand and dust storms in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals.

66. The Ministers welcomed the convening of the high-level interactive dialogue on sand and dust storms held at the UN Headquarters in New York on 16 July 2018, to discuss action-oriented recommendations to address the challenges faced by the affected countries, including ways to improve policy coordination at the global level to tackle those challenges in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals, in which United Nations Environmental Programme has suggested that an inter-agency network could be established with the aim of enhancing cooperation and coordination on the sand and dust storms agenda, in order to ensure a more coherent and consistent approach to tackling sand and dust storm issues at the global, regional and national levels.

67. The Ministers emphasize also that achieving Land Degradation Neutrality constitutes an accelerator to achieve the SDGs and responds to the overall objective of 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. They recognize that the Land Degradation Neutrality Fund, a unique public-private partnership, is an innovative model that can be replicated and provide a vehicle for the increased commitment of private capital to land management and restoration.

68. The Ministers recognized that the United Nations Forum on Forests, with its universal membership and comprehensive mandate, plays a vital role in addressing challenges and issues relating to forests in a holistic and integrated manner and in promoting policy coordination and cooperation to achieve the sustainable

management of all types of forests and of trees outside forests. They encouraged other forest-related forums, initiatives and processes to cooperate with the Forum to achieve sustainable forest management.

69. The Ministers stressed that the full implementation of Global Forest Goal 4 and its five associated targets constitutes a common aspiration to deliver a real impact on the ground, to catalyze and facilitate the mobilization of increased, predictable and sustaining financing from all sources, including and increasing in ODA, to adequately carry out sustainable forest management at all levels, in particular for developing countries. They reiterated that the adequate and timely implementation of the UNSPF is fundamental for developing countries. In this regard, they highlighted the important issue of financing and the need to recognize major gaps on current allocation of resources.

70. The Ministers called on the international community to restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation, reforestation and conservation globally. While protecting areas in forest and terrestrial ecosystems is on the rise and forest loss has slowed, other facets of terrestrial conservation continue to need accelerated efforts to protect biodiversity, land productivity and species and genetic resources.

71. The Ministers emphasized that water is critical for sustainable development and the eradication of poverty and hunger and is indispensable for human development, health and wellbeing and a vital element of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and other relevant goals in the social, environmental and economic fields.

72. The Ministers expressed their deep concern that lack of access to a safe drinking water source, basic sanitation and sound hygiene, water-related disasters, water scarcity and water pollution will be further exacerbated by urbanization, population growth, desertification, drought and other extreme weather events and climate change, as well as by the lack of capacity to ensure integrated water resource management. They stressed that developing countries need capacity building and transfer of environmentally sound technologies to achieve water efficiency.

73. The Ministers expressed their concerns that water stress is above 70 percent in some countries, including Northern Africa, Western Asia and Central and Southern Asia, as well as the Lake Chad Region, which indicates strong probability of future water scarcity. The Group acknowledges the additional challenges facing countries suffering from water scarcity and concerned with the impacts of such challenges including, inter-alia, on their ability to achieve the SDGs.

74. The Ministers stressed that ODA for the water sector should be increased taking into consideration that any reduction in external aid is likely to hamper progress towards implementation of SDG6.

75. The Ministers recognized that the World Water Forum, since its first convened in Marrakesh, Morocco, in 1997, has contributed to international dialogue on water and has promoted local, national and regional action on integrated and sustainable water resources management worldwide and acknowledges the successful organization of the Eighth World Water Forum in Brasilia, Brazil from 18 to 23 March 2018, contributing to establishing water priority at the global level.

76. The Ministers welcomed the launch of the International Decade "Water for Sustainable Development" 2018–2028, on 22 March 2018 which has the objectives to greater focus on the sustainable development and integrated management of water resources for the achievement of social, economic and environmental objectives, as well as on the furtherance of cooperation and partnership at all levels in order to help to achieve internationally agreed water-related goals and targets, including those contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

77. The Ministers welcomed the initiative of the Government of Tajikistan to host jointly with the United Nations the High-Level International Conference on the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018–2028 that took place in Tajikistan from 20–22 June 2018. In this regard, the Ministers also welcomed the initiative of Tajikistan to present the draft proposal on the midterm comprehensive review of the implementation of the International Decade for Action, "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018–2028 to the United Nations General Assembly in the fall of 2018.

78. The Ministers reiterated the need to commit to improving cooperation across borders, in transboundary waters.

79. The Ministers stressed the necessity of ensuring universal access to affordable, reliable and renewable energy for all according to national plans and policies. They reiterated that international cooperation should be strengthened to assist developing countries achieving this target as well as expanding infrastructure and upgrading technology for supplying renewable and sustainable energy services for all in developing countries.

80. The Ministers emphasized the need for strengthened political will and increased levels of investment and action by all stakeholders to increase access, on mutually agreed terms, to clean energy research and technology, according to national plans and policies. The Ministers underlined that international cooperation to facilitate access to clean energy research and technology, including renewable energy, energy efficiency and advanced and cleaner fossil-fuel technology must be strengthened with a view to transfer the relevant technologies to the developing countries.

81. The Ministers noted with appreciation that the transformation of the world's energy systems is being accelerated by advances in technology, rapid declines in the cost of renewable energy, deployment of least-cost decentralized solutions, policy support, new business models and sharing of best practices. In this regard, they welcomed the establishment of the International Solar Alliance as an international organization. They note with appreciation the work of the Global Energy Interconnection Development and Cooperation Organization (GEIDCO) and of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA).

82. The Ministers reiterated the importance of promoting and taking concrete action for the full, effective and timely implementation of the New Urban Agenda adopted in Quito, Ecuador, at all levels while urging the United Nations development system to maintain support for its implementation. They recalled that many cities are facing challenges in managing population growth, ensuring there is adequate housing and resilient infrastructure to support these growing populations, and addressing the environmental impacts of expanding cities and vulnerability to disasters.

83. The Ministers reaffirmed the significance of ensuring access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums. They expressed deep concern that, the actual number of people living in slums increased from 689 million to 883 million. In many cities, especially in the developing countries, slums dwellers constitute more than half of the urban population with little or no access to shelter, water, and sanitation. There is an urgent need for international cooperation and solidarity to improve the life of slum dwellers in the developing countries.

84. The Ministers recalls the common determination to protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, ensuring that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature. The Ministers stresses the need to accelerate implementation of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) Patterns with developed countries

taking the lead. They further stressed that developing countries need financial and technical assistance to strengthen their scientific and technological capacity to move towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production.

85. The Ministers reaffirmed that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions is the highest priority and the overarching objective of the repositioning of the UN development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda. In this regard, they reiterated that it is was of the utmost importance that the operational activities for development of the UN development system take into account the need to build, promote, and strengthen the capacity of developing countries in their efforts to address long-term sustainable development at the national level.

86. The Ministers stressed that the United Nations development system should continue to enhance its support for the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 and the Political Declaration of the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 of 2016, the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway and the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024, as well as the African Union Agenda 2063 and the programme of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, all of which are integral to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and calls upon the entities of the United Nations development system to integrate and mainstream them fully into their operational activities for development.

87. The Ministers stressed that all the mandates contained in General Assembly resolution 72/279 should be translated into actionable commitments across the UN Development System (UNDS) entities, and transparency, accountability and national ownership and leadership must be ensured during the whole process of implementation.

88. The Ministers emphasized that the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) should be prepared and finalized in full consultation and agreement with national governments, through an open and inclusive dialogue between the host Government and the UNDS in accordance with national development policies, plans, priorities, and country needs, and the criteria regarding the presence and the composition of the United Nations country teams should be determined based on country development priorities and long-term needs.

89. The Ministers also emphasized that the reinvigorated Resident Coordinator system should be development focused with eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions as its overarching objective, and that geographical and gender balance should be addressed to enhance the representation of the developing countries in the system, especially on the selection of Resident Coordinators and recruitment of the UN Development Operations Coordination Office's staff.

90. The Ministers reaffirmed that ODA is a critical source of funding the UNDS, and urged traditional donors to come forward with the required funds to the Special Purpose Trust Fund and the current gap in funding. They called for accelerated steps in all aspects of the reform, including the regional review, Multi-Country Office reviews and funding dialogue, while bearing in mind the importance of the consultations with the member states, especially developing countries.

91. The Ministers reaffirmed that the operational activities for development of the UN system should provide a key contribution of the implementation of the ambitious and transformational 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through the strengthening of national capacity. They also reaffirmed that strengthening the role and capacity of the United Nations development system to assist countries in

achieving their development goals requires continued improvement in its effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, inter-agency efforts and impact, along with a significant increase in resources. In this regard, the fundamental characteristics of United Nations operational activities for development must remain, among others, their universal, voluntary and grant nature, their neutrality and their multilateralism, as well as their ability to respond to the development needs of programme countries in a flexible manner. Moreover, operational activities should be carried out for the benefit of recipient countries, at the request of those countries and in accordance with their own national policies and priorities for development.

92. The Ministers stressed the necessity of the implementation of 2030 Agenda at all levels and strengthening the capacity of Member States, and in this regard, they reaffirmed the role of the United Nations Development System, in particular the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA), to support the inter-governmental UN processes and enhance the capacity of developing countries to implement the 2030 Agenda with a view to addressing national needs, priorities and challenges.

93. The Ministers reaffirmed General Assembly resolution 46/182, and the guiding principles, namely humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence for the provision of humanitarian assistance which remains the global framework for humanitarian assistance and coordination, as well as the promotion and respect for international humanitarian law.

94. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of humanitarian affairs and the necessity for the UN system and other relevant stakeholders to continue to enhance the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance in order to effectively address the needs of the increasing number of people affected by humanitarian emergencies.

95. The Ministers also underlined that response to humanitarian emergencies must be based on respect for the principles of international law, namely the sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of States. In this context, they stressed that international cooperation, technical and financial support from states, as well as the United Nations remain indispensable. At the same time, they noted that the response must be channeled in a way that does not undermine or replace the national or local mechanisms already put in place but rather strengthen them to afford governments the ability to respond promptly and more effectively and make significant and positive change for affected communities. In this regard, the Ministers recalled the primary role of affected states in humanitarian assistance, as well as national leadership in the initiation, organization and coordination of humanitarian assistance.

96. The Ministers stressed, in light of growing humanitarian need, the importance of increased and predictable humanitarian financing through innovative and diversified means from other states is becoming more urgent to assist developing countries to enhance their capacities and mobilize their own resources, and the importance of ensuring that humanitarian assistance reaches its intended beneficiaries.

97. The Ministers reaffirmed that relief, recovery, rehabilitation, reconstruction and longer-term development are different means to the one ultimate end and their complementarity should be underscored to ensure effective coordination of humanitarian assistance. While acknowledging that there is a need to narrow the humanitarian-development divide, they stressed that the line that separates their mandates and priorities must not be confused. The Ministers reiterated their firm conviction that there is a new way of working that brings them closer together while allowing them to do their respective functions in accordance with their comparative advantages in an integrated and coordinated manner.

98. The Ministers recalled that the international community has a commitment to support the implementation of relevant strategies and programmes of action, including the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 (IPoA) and the outcome document of its Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review, the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries and the SAMOA Pathway and the importance of supporting the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the programme of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), all of which are integral to the new Agenda. In that connection, international cooperation to provide assistance in terms of capacity building in areas of need, such as improvement of access to education and health, productive and trade capacity, development of environmentally sound technology, climate change mitigation and adaptation, among others, would be a crucial step forward. These specific programmes of action for LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS and African countries however, must remain the most important entry points for the international community to focus its attention and resources to assist these groups of countries. They also recognized the importance of addressing the diverse needs and challenges faced by middle-income countries.

99. The Ministers recalled the special needs of Africa and recognized that, while economic growth had improved, there was a need to sustain the recovery, which was fragile and uneven, to face the ongoing adverse impacts of multiple crises on development and the serious challenges that these impacts posed to the fight against poverty and hunger, which could further undermine the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals in Africa, including Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals and the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals.

100. The Ministers expressed profound concern about the fact that the commitment to doubling aid to Africa by 2010, as articulated at the summit of the Group of Eight held in Gleneagles, United Kingdom, had not been entirely reached and in this regard stressed the need to make rapid progress in order to fulfill that and other donors' commitments to increasing aid through a variety of means, including the provision of new additional resources and the transfer of technology to and the building of capacity in African countries, and to supporting their sustainable development. They called for continued support for Africa's development initiatives, including Agenda 2063 and its 10-year plan of action, the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa. On the other hand, they welcomed the support that some developing countries had extended to Africa through South-South and triangular cooperation programmes.

101. The Ministers welcomed the Beijing Declaration and the FOCAC Beijing Action Plan (2019–2021) adopted by the African countries and China at the recently held 2018 Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, covering fields such as industrial promotion, infrastructure connectivity, trade facilitation, health care and green development, which give strong impetus to the implementation of the Agenda 2063 and 2030 Agenda for sustainable development.

102. The Ministers underline the need to address the economic, social and environmental impact of climate change, desertification and land degradation in Africa, and highlights the importance of supporting the implementation of initiatives aimed at enhancing agriculture resilience in Africa, in particular the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme and other initiatives launched under the leadership of the African Union Commission such as the Great Green Wall and the Land Policy Initiative, as well as initiatives launched by African countries such as the Adaptation of African Agriculture and the Security, Stability and Sustainability initiatives.

103. The Ministers uncerlined the importance of the principles of universality and inclusiveness which must not be forgotten in order to enhance the capacities of LDCs towards their efforts to achieve the priority areas set forth in the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) and to implement the 2030 Agenda. The Ministers recalled the objective of the IPoA to enable half of the least developed countries to meet the criteria for graduation by 2020 and expressed concern that this target by 2020 is most unlikely to be fulfilled considering the current status of progress. The Ministers reiterated that with strong support, coordinated actions and acceleration of support from the international community, the LDCs will be able to strengthen their collective capacities in all sectors, including through structural transformation and this support will accelerate the achievement of graduation by the LDCs.

104. The Ministers reiterated that official development assistance continues to be the largest and a critical source of external financing for the development of the least developed countries ard that it provides a buffer to weather the impacts of the unstable and volatile global economic environment. They expressed their deep concern that overall share of ODA to LDCs in donor's GNI is only 0.09 per cent in 2016, while noting that total bilateral ODA from OECD-DAC to LDCs is estimated to have increased by 4 per cent in real terms to $26 billion in 2017, following several years of declines. They also recalled the provisions of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda that encouraged official development assistance providers to consider setting a target to provide at least 0.20 per cent of official development assistance/gross national income to least developed countries and expressed encouragement to those providers that are allocating at least 50 per cent of their official development assistance to least developed countries. They called upon all development partners to fulfil these targets.

105. The Ministers expressed deep concern that in 2016, the share of the least developed countries in exports of goods and services continued to decline, to 0.89 per cent of world exports, down from a peak value of 1.04 per cent in 2013, thereby moving further away from the target of 2 per cent of global exports called for in the Istanbul Programme of Action and target 17.11 of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Ministers also reaffirmed that fulfilling the commitments of the ministerial decisions of WTO for duty-free and quota-free market access for all products from all least developed countries and the least developed country-friendly rules of origin regime was urgently needed to reverse the decline in the global trade share of those countries. In addition, fulfilling those commitments would also contribute to the achievement of the target contained in the IPoA of doubling the share of least developed countries in global export. In that regard, it is important that at least 50 per cent of the Aid for Trade by development partners be allotted to the least developed countries. The Ministers called for significant progress on LDCs issues, preferential rules of origin and the application of the LDCs' services waiver at the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference.

106. The Ministers expressed concern that, despite minor signs of recovery the latest global financial and economic crisis has been clearly undermining development in all developing countries and recalled that the modest development gains, in particular those in the least developed countries, made over the years are being reversed, pushing a larger number of their people to extreme poverty. The Ministers expressed their concern that, under the current growth trajectory, nearly 35 per cent of the population in least developed countries could remain in extreme poverty by 2030. Many least developed countries continue to be lagging behind in meeting most of the internationally agreed development goals, including the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals.

107. The Ministers expressed deep concern that LDCs are disproportionately affected by a variety of systemic shocks, including the global financial and economic crisis, commodity price volatility, health epidemics, natural disasters and other

environmental shocks. These shocks not only halt the pace of economic progress and deteriorate poverty, but also undermine the capacity of LDCs to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In this regard, the Ministers underlined the need for establishing a comprehensive multi-stakeholder resilience-building mechanism for LDCs, leveraging the existing measures and initiatives.

108. The Ministers stressed the need for the international community to remain vigilant in monitoring the debt situation of the least developed countries as many of them are in debt distress or at high risk of debt distress situation and the ratio of debt service to exports sharply worsened over the period, rising from 4.1 per cent in 2008 to almost 10 per cent in 2017. The Ministers called upon the international community to continue to take effective measures, preferably within existing frameworks, when applicable, to address the debt problem of those countries, including through coordinated policies aimed at fostering debt financing, debt relief, debt restructuring and sound debt management, as appropriate, for the multilateral and bilateral debt owed by the least developed countries to creditors, both public and private. They reiterated their commitment to work through existing initiatives, such as the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative. They reaffirmed the importance of transparency in debt management.

109. The Ministers welcomed the operationalization of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries, and the inauguration of its headquarters in Gebze, Turkey, they emphasized the need to sustain its financing in order to fulfill its potential to foster productive capacity, structural transformation, poverty eradication and sustainable development. They also called upon all relevant stakeholders to ensure continued financial and, in kind support for the effective functioning of the Technology Bank.

110. The Ministers reaffirmed that sustainable development cannot be realized without peace and security, and that peace and security will be at risk without sustainable development. In this regard, they further recognized that the least developed countries in conflict and post-conflict situations and those experiencing political instability, or unable to deliver basic State services, have specific structural challenges and require context-specific approaches, including targeted national policies and international support measures to address these challenges and to support peacebuilding, State-building activities and sustainable development. The Ministers took note of the principles set out in the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States by the Group of Seven Plus, countries that are, or have been, affected by conflict.

111. The Ministers recognized the special development needs and challenges of landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) arising from their landlockedness, remoteness from world markets and geographical constraints that impose serious impediments for export earnings, private capital inflow and domestic resource mobilization of landlocked developing countries and therefore adversely affect their overall sustainable development and expressed concern that their efforts towards sustainable development are affected by the frequent falling of commodity prices and that the LLDCs are highly exposed to climate change and disproportionately affected by its adverse impacts. The Ministers called upon the development partners, transit countries and international organizations to mainstream the Vienna Programme of Action and establish special facilities, for the LLDCs as appropriate, to assist them with execution and scaling-up of trade facilitation initiatives and effective implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement, and invited multilateral financial and development institutions and regional development banks to establish dedicated infrastructure funding for the LLDCs. The Ministers noted the declaration adopted at the Fifth Meeting of Trade Ministers of LLDCs held in June 2016 in Geneva that calls for the establishment of a specific Work Programme for LLDCs at the WTO by the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference, the Communique adopted at the Ministerial

Meeting of the Group of LLDCs at the margins of the 11th Ministerial Conference of the WTO held in Buenos Aires in December 2017 and the Ministerial Communiqué of the Landlocked Developing Countries adopted prior to the fourteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD XIV) in July 2016, as well as the Ministerial Declaration adopted at the Ministerial Meeting of Landlocked Developing Countries on Trade and Transport held in Astana, Kazakhstan in May 2018.

112. The Ministers reaffirmed their strong commitment to the implementation of the Vienna Declaration and the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024, and encouraged the landlocked developing countries, transit countries, their development partners, the United Nation system and all other actors to implement the actions that have been agreed upon in the Vienna Programme of Action, in its six priority areas, namely: fundamental transit policy issues; infrastructure development and maintenance; international trade and trade facilitation; regional integration and cooperation; structural economic transformation; and means of implementation; in a coordinated, coherent and expeditious manner. Furthermore, the Ministers reaffirmed that the Vienna Programme of Action is integral to the 2030 Agenda. They emphasized the importance of fostering strong synergy and coherence in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Vienna Programme of Action and encouraged coordination and coherence in the follow-up of their implementation. The Ministers stressed that the availability of and use of accessible, timely, reliable and high-quality disaggregated data to measure poverty in all its forms and dimensions as well as progress on sustainable development underpin the efforts to leave no one behind and called upon the development partners and international organizations to assist LLDCs in building and strengthening their official national capacities for data collection, disaggregation, dissemination and analysis. They called upon a revitalized Global Partnership based on renewed and strengthened partnerships between landlocked developing countries and the transit countries, their development partners and other stakeholders for the full, successful and timely implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action.

113. The Ministers welcomed the operationalisation of the International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries. They emphasized the need to build a platform which generates knowledge and develops analytical tools in order to maximize landlocked developing countries' coordinated efforts and overcome their common challenge — landlockedness. They also called upon all relevant stakeholders to ensure voluntary contributions and supports for the effective functioning of the International Think Tank.

114. The Ministers reaffirmed that small island developing States remain a "special case" for sustainable development owing to their unique and particular vulnerabilities, including their small size, remoteness, narrow resource and export base, and exposure to global environmental challenges, including to a large range of impacts from climate change and more frequent and intense natural disasters. Climate change and sea level rise continue to pose a significant risk to small island developing States and their efforts to achieve sustainable development and, represent the gravest threat to their survival and viability, including through the loss of territory.

115. The Ministers welcomed the progress made in the implementation of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA Pathway), adopted at the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, held in Apia from 1 to 4 September 2014, and further encouraged greater momentum towards its full implementation, as it represents the international community's renewed political commitment to the sustainable development of small island developing States, and further welcomed the upcoming one-day high-level review of the SAMOA Pathway,

to be held in September 2019. In preparation, Ministers noted with appreciation the successful regional meetings, held during 2018, in Mauritius, Tonga, and Belize, and look forward to the interregional meeting, to be held in Samoa, October 2018. In this regard, the Ministers called on all States to show solidarity with SIDS by participating at the highest level at the 2019 high-level review. The Ministers acknowledged the close interlinkages between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SAMOA Pathway. In addition, they urged full and effective implementation of both agendas, including the fulfilment of the provisions of all means of implementation. In this regard, the Ministers also encouraged other initiatives and programmes in support of the sustainable development priorities of SIDS. This includes the Partnership Framework for Small Island Developing States, which monitors and ensures the full implementation of pledges and commitments for SIDS.

116. The Ministers recalled that despite notable reductions in poverty, middle-income countries are still home to most of the world's people living in poverty and inequalities and gaps still remain. They continue to face significant challenges to achieve sustainable development. The Ministers reiterated the urgent need to identify ways and means to ensure that the diverse and specific development needs of middle-income countries are appropriately considered and addressed, in a tailored fashion, in their relevant strategies and policies, with a view to promoting a coherent and comprehensive approach towards individual countries. In this context, the UN development system must improve its support to different country contexts, including how to provide efficient, effective, more coordinated and better and focused support to middle-income countries.

117. The Ministers recognized the importance of addressing the specific challenges facing middle-income countries. In order to ensure that achievements made to date are sustained, efforts to address ongoing challenges should be strengthened through the exchange of experiences, improved coordination and better and focused support from the United Nations development system, the international financial institutions, regional organizations and other stakeholders. The Ministers also acknowledged that official development assistance and other concessional finance are still important for a number of these countries and have a role to play for targeted results, taking into account the specific needs of these countries. In this regard, the Ministers highlighted the need to make all institutional arrangements necessary to support middle-income countries within the United Nations system and its respective mandates, in particular through a comprehensive UN system-wide and long term strategy aimed at facilitating sustainable development cooperation and coordinated support towards MICs.

118. The Ministers stressed that the interlinkages among the SDGs, and addressing the well-being and the rights of youth, women and girls, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, older persons, migrants, refugees and those in vulnerable situations, are a prerequisite for achieving the 2030 Agenda.

119. The Ministers noted that full and productive employment and decent work for all are important elements of sustainable development for all countries and it is therefore an important objective of international cooperation.

120. The Ministers took note with appreciation of the IV Global Conference on the sustained eradication of Child Labour held in Buenos Aires in November 2017 and took note of the Buenos Aires Declaration on Child labour, forced labour and youth employment adopted by the conference.

121. The Ministers welcomed the measures taken by the G77 countries to promote the empowerment of women and girls and remain fully committed to gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and welcomed progress made by women and girls in many fields around the world. However, they noted that poverty, inequality, violence and discrimination linger in the world's current affairs,

particularly affecting women and girls living in countries affected by armed conflict and living under colonial administration and foreign occupation, unilateral coercive measures or unilateral economic, financial or trade measures not in accordance with International Law and the Charter of the United Nations.

122. The Ministers affirm that an environment that maintains world peace and promotes and protects human rights, the democracy and the peaceful settlement of disputes, in accordance with and principles of non-threat or use of force against territorial integrity or political independence and of respect for sovereignty as set forth in of the Charter of the United Nations, is an important factor for the advancement of women.

123. The Ministers welcomed the convening of the G-77 High-Level Interactive Dialogue on "Innovative practices for the financial inclusion and economic empowerment of women especially rural women: Lessons from the South" held at UN Headquarters in New York on 13 March 2018. They emphasized the mutually reinforcing relationship among women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work and the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They acknowledged the important contribution of women and girls to sustainable development and reiterated that gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and women's full and equal participation and leadership in the economy are vital for achieving sustainable development, promoting peaceful, just and inclusive societies, enhancing sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and productivity, ending poverty in all its forms everywhere and ensuring the well-being of all.

124. The Ministers welcomed the convening of the G-77 Interactive Discussion on "Women's Economic Empowerment and Financial Inclusion" held at UN Headquarters in New York on (27–28 June 2018). They underlined that women's economic empowerment is essential to sustainable development, and that not only it helps to fulfill women's rights, but also fosters gender equality and improve the lives and wellbeing of women, but it also accelerates achievement across other development outcomes including economic growth, improved health and education indicators, food security, resilience and sustainable peace. They underlined that women's economic empowerment is and independence are vital to their role as full and equal partners for development. The Ministers recognize that progress requires the full and equal integration of women into the economy, in particular into economic decision-making processes.

125. The Ministers recognized that violence against women and girls continues to be a major obstacle to the achievement of gender equality. The ministers emphasize the need for measures to prevent and eliminate all forms of gender violence, in particular femicide, and to ensure that women with disabilities, girls, youth, indigenous, Afro-descendant and older women, are not subject to multiple or aggravated forms of discrimination thus the need to improve the collection and analysis of data on the economy, disaggregated by sex, income, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, and other relevant factors.

126. The Ministers recognized in the vast potential of young people to contribute towards sustainable development and social cohesion and noted that unavailability of quality employment in most developing countries not only blocks the successful transition of young people from school to decent jobs, but also impedes economic growth and development as a whole. Therefore, it is important that efforts at every level are taken to improve the quality of and access to education, and to enhance the acquisition of skills for youth towards decent work. The Ministers encouraged the international community, including the UN and development agencies, by taking into

consideration the sovereign right of all countries to develop their own national legislation and policies, in accordance with the international law, to continue and enhance their support, both technically and financially in education, training and skills development for young people.

127. The Ministers recognize the commitment made to strive to provide children and youth with a nurturing environment for the full realization of their rights and capabilities, helping our countries to reap the demographic dividend, including through safe schools and cohesive communities and families.

128. The Ministers welcomed the adoption of General Assembly resolution 71/178 of 19 December 2016 which decided to proclaim 2019 as the International Year of Indigenous Languages, to draw world attention to the critical loss of indigenous languages and the urgent need to preserve, revitalize and promote indigenous languages and recognized the work carry out by UNESCO in preparation for the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages.

129. The Ministers expressed their commitment to the accelerated implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. In this regard, they reiterated their opposition to all forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in all parts of the world and expressed deep concern on the resurgence of contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance in all parts of the world. They reaffirmed that all forms of racism, and xenophobia as well as foreign occupation among others constitute serious violations of human rights, which should be rejected through all political and legal means. They condemned all forms of racism, and discrimination spread through the new communications technology, including the Internet.

130. The Ministers noted the Programme of Activities for the Implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent, including the establishment of a forum to serve as a consultation mechanism, the elaboration of a draft UN declaration on the rights of people of African descent and the adoption and implementation of policies and programmes to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance faced by people of African descent.

131. The Ministers welcomed the convening of the High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly to end Tuberculosis, at the United Nations Headquarters on the 26 September 2018. In this regard, the Ministers recalled that in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the international community committed to ending the tuberculosis epidemic, achieve universal health coverage, address the social and economic determinants of the epidemic and support the research and development of new vaccines and medicines for the communicable and non-communicable diseases.

132. The Ministers noted that tuberculosis is a curable and preventable disease. Nonetheless, 1.7 million people died from the disease in 2016 according to WHO figures, and it is estimated that more than 9.2 billion US dollars are required per year to address the challenge of ending tuberculosis, including its drug resistance forms, from both domestic and donor financing. An extra 1.3 billion dollars is required to fund the gap for tuberculosis research. The Ministers called upon donors to scale up their funding for research and development and supporting the implementation of national plans to end Tuberculosis. The Ministers welcomed High-Level commitments for action against tuberculosis at global, regional and sub-regional levels, including at the Delhi End TB Summit held in March 2018 and through the creation of the BRICS Tuberculosis Research Network.

133. Furthermore, the Ministers welcomed the convening of the Third High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on Non-Communicable Diseases at the United

Nations Headquarters on 27 September 2018. They underscored its importance as the first such meeting in the context of the Sustainable Development Agenda. They underlined that in the 2030 Agenda the international community committed to reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being, by addressing the risk factors as well the social and economic ones.

134. The Ministers noted with concern that non-communicable diseases pose an enormous burden on all countries. However, these costs are particularly challenging for developing nations, especially as they have to face exorbitant costs of health technologies. They underlined that the global response to non-communicable diseases remains an area of particular challenge since the current level of progress is insufficient to meet the 2030 Agenda's relevant goals and commitments made under the high-level meetings of the UN General Assembly on non-communicable diseases in 2011 and 2014. Lack of capacity and near zero increase in ODA to address the issue as well as the protection of NCDs policies from commercial and other vested interest of the industry continued to be key challenges.

135. As the international community prepares for the High-Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage to be convened on 26 September 2019, the Ministers emphasized the need to promote access to affordable, safe, effective and quality medicines, diagnostics and other technologies. In this regard, Ministers have recognized that generic drugs have played a key role in ensuring access to medicines in the developing world. They have called on all parties to urgently remove all obstacles that limit the capacity of countries to use, to the full extent, the TRIPS flexibilities, as confirmed by the Doha Declaration on TRIPS and Public Health, as well as acknowledge the need to effectively implement the Global Strategy and Plan of Action on Public Health as important tools to help develop national capacities in developing countries in order to strengthen public health and ensure the universal access of the population to medicines and medical technologies without any kind of restriction to specific diseases.

136. The Ministers underscored the need to ensure that all research and development efforts should be needs-driven, evidence-based and guided by the principles of affordability, effectiveness and efficiency and equity, and should be considered as a shared responsibility. In this regard, they have stressed on the importance of delinking the cost of investment in research and development from the price and volume of sales so as to facilitate equitable and affordable access to new medicines, diagnostic tools, vaccines, as well as other innovative care and prevention approaches results to be gained through research and development, as highlighted in previous health-related political declarations.

137. The Ministers emphasized that transnational corporations have a responsibility to respect all human rights and should refrain from causing environmental degradation and environmental disasters and affecting the well-being of peoples.

138. The Ministers recalled with appreciation the decision of the Human Rights Council, in its resolution 26/9, to establish an Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group on Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises with Respect to Human Rights (OEIGWG), and took note of the presentation of a draft international legally binding instrument to regulate, in international human rights law, the activities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises, as well as its draft optional protocol, both focusing on the victims of business related human rights abuses, and encouraged Member States to participate in the upcoming 4th session of the Working Group-OEIGWG established by the Human Rights Council resolution 26/9, to be held in the Human Rights Council on 15–19 October 2018.

139. The Ministers recognized the positive contribution of migrants to inclusive growth and sustainable development in countries of origin, transit and destination.

140. The Ministers stressed that migration is an enabler of development. The roles and responsibilities of the countries of origin, transit and destination should be appropriately balanced. It is crucial to cooperate internationally to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration involving full respect for human rights and the humane treatment of migrants, regardless of their migration status, refugees and displaced persons. Such cooperation should also strengthen the resilience of communities hosting refugees, particularly in developing countries.

141. The Ministers recognized that international migration is a multidimensional reality of major relevance to the development of origin, transit and destination countries that must be addressed in a coherent, comprehensive and balanced manner. They endeavoured to increase cooperation on access to and portability of earned benefits, enhance the recognition of foreign qualifications, education and skills, lower the costs of recruitment for migrants and combat unscrupulous recruiters, and smuggling of migrants, in accordance with national circumstances and legislation. They further endeavored to implement effective social communication strategies on the contribution of migrants to sustainable development in all its dimensions, in particular in countries of destination, in order to combat racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia, facilitate social integration and protect migrants' human rights through national frameworks. They reaffirm the need to promote and protect effectively the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all migrants, especially those of women and children, regardless of their migration status.

142. The Ministers expressed their commitment to protecting the human rights of migrant children, given their vulnerability, particularly of unaccompanied as well as separated migrant children, and to providing for their health, education and psychosocial development, ensuring that the best interests of the child are a primary consideration in policies of integration, return and family reunification.

143. The Ministers welcomed the Intergovernmental Conference to Adopt the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration which will be held in Marrakech, Morocco, on 10–11 December 2018.

144. The Ministers reiterated their position that South-South cooperation is a complement to, rather than a substitute for, North-South cooperation and reaffirmed that South-South cooperation is a collective endeavor of developing countries. The Ministers emphasized that South-South cooperation deserves its own separate and independent promotion, as reaffirmed in the Nairobi outcome document. In this context, the Ministers stressed that South-South cooperation and its agenda must be driven by the countries of the South.

145. The Ministers reiterated their strong support to the mandate of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) and stressed that the Office is the articulator of South-South cooperation in the United Nations system. They appreciated the countries of the south who have stepped up their cooperation with UNOSSC which has also enhanced its role and impact by up-scaling it in terms of financial, human and budgetary resources in order to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

146. The Ministers expressed appreciation for the preparations of the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA) to be held in Buenos Aires from 20 to 22 March 2019, including various regional, sub-regional and sectorial meetings and consultations such as the workshop in Beijing, China in May 2018, the Asia Pacific regional consultation in Bangkok, Thailand in June 2018, and the

brainstorming workshop in Cairo, Egypt in July 2018. It will present an opportunity to review trends, assess progress, review lessons learned and identify challenges with a view to enhance the current institutional arrangements to effectively support South-South cooperation and promote South-South agenda and to step up south-south cooperation contribution to the ambitious goal of eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, taking advantage of the significant achievements by developing countries. Also, Ministers stressed that, in order to maintain the momentum created by PABA 40, hosting regularly high-level meetings to reflect South-South developments should be considered to adapt it to the needs of developing countries.

147. The Ministers reiterated the Group's submission conveyed as an input for the preparation of the UN Secretary-General's report to the Conference "Role of South-South cooperation and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: challenges and opportunities". In this regard, the Ministers recalled the set of principles (14 principles) for South-South cooperation contained in the Declaration adopted on the occasion of their thirty-second Annual Ministerial Meeting held at UN Headquarters in New York on 26 September 2008 that should continue to guide the Group during the preparatory process for the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation:

i. South-South cooperation is a common endeavour of peoples and countries of the South and must be pursued as an expression of South-South solidarity and a strategy for economic independence and self-reliance of the South based on their common objectives and solidarity;

ii. South-South cooperation and its agenda must be driven by the countries of the South;

iii. South-South cooperation must not be seen as a replacement for North-South cooperation. Strengthening South-South cooperation must not be a measure of coping with the receding interest of the developed world in assisting developing countries;

iv. Cooperation between countries of the South must not be analyzed and evaluated using the same standards as those used for North-South relations;

v. Financial contributions from other developing countries should not be seen as Official Development Assistance from these countries to other countries of the South. These are merely expressions of solidarity and cooperation borne out of shared experiences and sympathies;

vi. South-South cooperation is a development agenda based on premises, conditions and objectives that are specific to the historic and political context of developing countries and to their needs and expectations. South-South cooperation deserves its own separate and independent promotion;

vii. South-South cooperation is based on a strong, genuine, broad-based partnership and solidarity;

viii. South-South cooperation is based on complete equality, mutual respect and mutual benefit;

ix. South-South cooperation respects national sovereignty in the context of shared responsibility;

x. South-South cooperation strives for strengthened multilateralism in the promotion of an action-oriented approach to development challenges;

xi. South-South cooperation promotes the exchange of best practices and support among developing countries in the common pursuit of their broad

development objectives (encompassing all aspects of international relations and not just in the traditional economic and technical areas);

xii. South-South cooperation is based on the collective self-reliance of developing countries;

xiii. South-South cooperation seeks to enable developing countries to play a more active role in international policy and decision-making processes, in support of their efforts to achieve sustainable development;

xiv. The modalities and mechanisms for promoting South-South cooperation are based on bilateral, sub-regional, regional and interregional cooperation and integration as well as multilateral cooperation.

148. The Ministers invited the Member States of the Group of 77 to come forward with an offer of venue for hosting the thirteenth session of the Intergovernmental Follow-up and Coordination Committee on South-South Cooperation (IFCC-XIII) in 2019. They also invited Member States to host sectoral meetings in various fields of cooperation including South-South forums for parliamentarians, mayors, youth, media and civil society and other thematic meetings as envisaged in the Doha Plan of Action adopted by the Second South Summit held in Doha, Qatar from 12 to 16 June 2005 and looked forward to the continued support of the UN Office for South-South Cooperation in this regard.

149. The Ministers noted that, in view of the mounting and intractable challenges that developing countries face, more frequent high-level meetings of the Group on thematic/sectoral issues, and with action-oriented outcomes, might be required. To this end, the Ministers invited Member States of the Group of 77 to make offers to host regularly high-level meetings of the Group on key issues of interest to the South and looked forward to the continued support of the UN Office for South-South Cooperation in this regard.

150. The Ministers welcomed with appreciation the kind offer by the Government of Uganda to host the Third South Summit in Kampala in 2019 and mandated the Chair of the Group of 77 to undertake necessary consultations with the Government of Uganda on the offer of venue with particular regard to the infrastructure facilities and related logistical arrangements and to inform the Group on the outcome of such consultations.

151. The Ministers noted the various experiences and home-grown approaches to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and reiterated the importance of learning and sharing of best practices including through North-South, South-South and Triangular Cooperation, including, among others, Thailand's initiative on "Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) for SDGs Partnerships", as well as the importance of concrete collaboration between Member States and the United Office of South-South Cooperation, including the South-South-in-Action series on Thailand's application of the SEP, Bangladesh's citizen-friendly public service innovation, Cuba's best practices in health, education, climate change and disaster reduction, and agriculture sectors, as well as UAE's best practices through the Global South-South Development Expo and the launch of the francophone network of actors for South-South and tripartite cooperation in Morocco on 18 July 2018. They also noted other experiences that enhance South-South Cooperation, inter alia, PETROCARIBE by Venezuela, and the Singapore Cooperation Programme by Singapore.

152. The Ministers recognized the role of the South Centre as a think-tank of the countries of the South and emphasized its importance in enhancing South-South Cooperation through promoting solidarity and mutual understanding among the countries and peoples of the South, as well as providing the intellectual and policy

support required by developing countries for collective and individual action in the international arena.

153. The Ministers recalled the importance of oceans for sustainable development as embodied in Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, various decisions taken by the former Commission on Sustainable Development as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including Goal 14 Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources. Oceans, seas, islands and coastal areas form an integrated and essential component of the Earth's ecosystem and are critical for global food security and for sustaining economic prosperity and the well-being of many national economies, particularly in developing countries. The Ministers further recalled that, in this context, targets related to means of implementation including target 14.a, related to increasing scientific knowledge, developing research capacities and transferring marine technology in order to improve ocean health and to enhance the contribution of marine biodiversity to the development of developing countries, in particular small island developing States and least developed countries are crucial for the achievement of sustainable development.

154. In this context, the Ministers welcomed the holding in June 2017 of the UN Conference to support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, sea and marine resources for sustainable development. They strongly supported the Outcome of the Conference: "Our Ocean, Our Future: Call for Action", which raises awareness of the commitments needed to achieve the targets of Goal 14 within the timelines and stresses the need to sustain action over the long term to address the causes that impair the irreplaceable role and the health of the Ocean. The "Call for Action" and the voluntary commitments announced at the Conference are just one step and one way forward to conserve and sustainably use the Ocean.

155. The Ministers reiterated the importance to embark collectively in building commitments and in taking actions beyond those mentioned in the Call for Action, either by establishing further voluntary commitments or by fostering measures in our daily life activities, that would allow the international community to contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of the Ocean and to ensure that it supports the needs of present and future generations. They expressed the sincere hope that all the commitments adopted at the Conference and the ones formulated beyond are immediately put into practice with the participation and involvement of all the citizens of the world, starting with the representatives of States as advocate for the well-being and common good of humanity and the planet.

156. The Ministers stressed the need for the comprehensive global regime to better address the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. They stressed the importance of the adoption of resolution 72/249 of 24 December 2017, wherein the General Assembly decided to convene an Intergovernmental Conference, under the auspices of the United Nations, to consider the recommendations of the Preparatory Committee established by General Assembly resolution 69/292: Development of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ), and to elaborate the text of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, with a view to developing the instrument as soon as possible. In this context, the Ministers underlined the importance of this achievement and welcomed the holding of the organizational meeting in April 2018 as well as the first substantive session of the Intergovernmental Conference at UN Headquarter from 4–17 September 2018, they commended the fruitful discussions that took place, and

reiterated the need for all relevant stakeholders to build on these discussions to advance this important process following the right pace.

157. The Ministers recalled that such an instrument must encompass the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, including marine genetic resources, and the question of the sharing of benefits, measures such as area-based management tools, including marine protected areas, environmental impact assessments and capacity-building and the transfer of marine technology, without prejudice to the coastal State's sovereign rights over their respective Exclusive Economic Zone and their extended continental shelf.

158. The Ministers recognized that neither participation in the intergovernmental conference nor its outcome may affect the legal status of non-parties to the Convention or any other related agreements with regard to those instruments, or the legal status of parties to the Convention or any other related agreements with regard to those instruments, as agreed by the General Assembly in paragraph 10 of resolution 72/249.

159. The Ministers firmly reiterated that the principle of common heritage of mankind should guide and underpin the new legal regime for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, including the access and sharing of benefits of Marine Genetic Resources (MGRs). They are of the view that this principle provides a legal foundation for a fair and equitable regime that would allow all countries to benefit from the potential that marine biodiversity represents in terms of global food security and economic prosperity, and to address the challenges of conservation and sustainable use of MGRs of areas beyond national jurisdictions.

160. The Ministers emphasized that capacity building and transfer of technology should be promoted and carried out on fair, favorable and reasonable terms and conditions, especially with regards to developing countries. Furthermore, they highlighted the importance of encouraging international cooperation at all levels, including North-South/South-South cooperation and partnerships with relevant stakeholders.

161. The Ministers underscored that Area-based management tools (ABMTs), including marine protected areas (MPAs), which should be established on the basis of existing internationally recognized criteria, play an important role for, and should have as a main objective, the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. They expressed the view that the protection and preservation of the marine environment, inclusiveness, transparency, and the precautionary approach taking into account best available science, are principles that should guide the establishment of Area-based management tools, including marine protected areas.

162. The Ministers recalled that the legal bases for the conduct of environmental impact assessments are reflected in the provisions of UNCLOS in particular articles 204 and 206, and in this regard the Ministers expressed the view that liability for damage to the marine environment from activities from areas beyond national jurisdiction should be addressed in the future BBNJ instrument.

163. The Ministers reaffirmed that the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly is the sole Main Committee of the Organization entrusted with responsibilities for administrative, financial and budgetary matters. In this regard, the Ministers requested that any budgetary, financial and administrative matters, including those related to the establishment of a peacekeeping operation or a special political mission, be discussed solely in the framework of the Fifth Committee, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations.

164. The Ministers recognized the efforts led by the Secretary-General on management reform and took note of the adoption of resolution A/72/266 B by the General Assembly. They emphasized that reforms should result in better mandate delivery, enhanced transparency, accountability, efficiency and oversight. They underscored the centrality of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as the need to monitor and evaluate mandate implementation. They stressed the importance of addressing gender parity and balanced geographical representation at all levels of the Secretariat and ensuring fair and equitable access to United Nations procurement opportunities for developing country Member States.

165. The Ministers reaffirmed that any Secretariat and management reform efforts, including on its budget process, must not be intended to change the intergovernmental, multilateral and international nature of the Organization, but must strengthen the ability of Member States to perform their oversight and monitoring role and that prior consideration by and approval of Member States is essential in all cases where the measures to be implemented fall under the prerogatives of the Assembly. In this regard, they recall resolution 66/257. They also reaffirmed the right of the entire membership of the United Nations to pronounce itself on the administration of the Organization, including on budgetary matters, and the need for continuous interaction and dialogue between the Secretariat and the General Assembly aimed at fostering a positive environment for the negotiations, the decision-making process and the implementation of the reform measures.

166. The Ministers strongly supported the oversight role performed by the General Assembly, as well as its relevant intergovernmental and expert bodies, in planning, programming, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation. In this context, they renewed their commitment to strengthen the role of the Committee for Programme and Coordination. The Ministers also urged the rest of the membership of the United Nations to actively participate in the sessions of the Committee.

167. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of the strategic framework as the principal policy directive of the Organization and that its content should fully reflect the mandates approved by Member States, including the United Nations financial rules and regulations.

168. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of preserving the budget methodology, the established budgetary procedures and practices and the rules and regulations governing the budget process, and stressed that the level of resources to be approved by the General Assembly must be commensurate with all mandated programmes and activities in order to ensure their full and effective implementation. In this sense, they underlined that the existing recosting methodology is a fundamental and integral element of the budgetary methodology agreed in the General Assembly and affirmed that the existing recosting methodology ensures that mandated activities are not negatively impacted by currency fluctuations and inflation.

169. The Ministers underlined that the current methodology for the preparation of the scale of assessments reflects changes in the relative economic situations of the United Nations Member States. The Ministers further reaffirmed the principle of "capacity to pay" as the fundamental criterion in the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations and rejected any change to the elements of the current methodology for the preparation of the scale of assessments aimed at increasing the contributions of developing countries. In this regard, they emphasized that the core elements of the current methodology of the scale of assessment, such as base period, Gross National Income, conversion rates, low per capita income adjustment, gradient, floor, ceiling for Least Developed Countries and debt stock adjustment must be kept intact and are not negotiable.

170. The Ministers stressed that the current maximum assessment rate, or ceiling, had been fixed as a political compromise and is contrary to the principle of the capacity to pay and is a fundamental source of distortion in the scale of assessments. In this context, they urged the General Assembly to undertake a review of this arrangement, in accordance with paragraph 2 of General Assembly resolution 55/5 C.

171. The Ministers emphasized that organizations which have an enhanced observer status at the United Nations giving them the rights and privileges usually only applied to observer states, such as the right to speak in the general debate of the General Assembly and the right of reply, should also have the same financial obligations to the United Nations as observer states. In this context, they urged the General Assembly to consider a decision on an assessment for such organizations.

172. The Ministers affirmed that the current principles and guidelines for the apportionment of the expenses of peacekeeping operations approved by the General Assembly in its relevant resolutions should constitute a basis for any discussion on the peacekeeping scale. In this regard, the Ministers stressed that the peacekeeping scale must clearly reflect the special responsibilities of the permanent members of the Security Council for the maintenance of peace and security. The Ministers also recalled that the economically less developed countries have limited capacity to contribute towards the budgets of peacekeeping operations. In this context, the Ministers emphasized that any discussion on the system of discounts applied to the peacekeeping scale should take into account the conditions of developing countries whose current positions must not be negatively affected. The Ministers stressed, in this regard, that no member of the Group of 77 and China that is not a permanent member of the Security Council, should therefore be categorized above level C.

173. The Ministers express their concern for the growing restrictive nature of "earmarked" contributions within different United Nations entities, such as UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS and UNICEF among others. They also emphasized that regular resources are the bedrock of those entities and are essential to maintain and fulfill their universal mandate and work. Hence, the declining trend of regular resources and a high concentration of earmarked funds put the organization at risk of not having the capacity to deliver on its programmes. The Ministers appealed to assure stable and predictable contributions and noted the important need to emphasize the quality, flexibility, predictability, transparency and alignment of such contributions.

174. The Ministers reiterated their support to the United Nations Programme of Assistance in the Teaching, Study, Dissemination and Wider Appreciation of International Law established by General Assembly resolution 2099 (XX) of 20 December 1965 for the purpose of contributing to greater knowledge of international law as a means of strengthening international peace and security and promoting friendly relations and cooperation among States. They recalled that the Programme and its components are one of the cornerstones of the efforts of the United Nations to promote international law and that jurists, academics, diplomats and other public officials from developing countries greatly benefit from the regional courses of international law, fellowships, publications and the Audiovisual Library of International Law. In this regard, the Ministers welcomed the inclusion of additional resources under the programme budget for the current biennium for the organization of the Regional Courses in International Law for Africa, for Asia-Pacific and for Latin America and the Caribbean each year and for the continuation and further development of the United Nations Audiovisual Library of International Law. They also expressed their commitment to include the International Law Fellowship Programme, the seminars and regional training on international treaty laws and practice and the legal publications and training materials, as well as the necessary funding for the Hamilton Shirley Amerasinghe Memorial Fellowship, in the regular budget of the United Nations.

175. The Ministers resolved to take further effective measures and actions, in conformity with international law, to remove obstacles and constraints, strengthen support and meet the special needs of people living in areas affected by complex humanitarian emergencies and in areas affected by terrorism. In this context, they called for strengthening international cooperation and national institutions to combat money-laundering and financing of terrorism.

176. The Ministers reiterated their commitment to intensify international efforts directed at safeguarding cyberspace and promoting its exclusive use for the achievement of peaceful purposes and as a vehicle to contribute to both economic and social development. They highlighted that international cooperation in accordance with domestic law and as far as international obligations require, as well as in full respect of human rights, is the only viable option for fostering the positive effects of information and communications technologies, preventing their potential negative effects, promoting their peaceful and legitimate use and guaranteeing that both scientific and technological progress are directed at preserving peace and promoting the welfare and development of humanity.

177. The Ministers reiterated that each country has the sovereign right to decide its own development priorities and strategies and that there is no "one size fits all" approach. In this regard, they stressed the need for policy space and policy flexibility for developing countries.

178. The Ministers stressed the need to enable the Governments of developing countries to effectively formulate their own development strategies and policy tools, in line with their national priorities and circumstances. In this regard, the support of the UN system and other international partners, backed by resource commitments are crucial to help catalyze the much-needed structural changes through people-centered and well-designed economic and social policies that promote inclusive growth, job creation, investment in education, health-care and infrastructure, social safety net and empowerment of women, among other aspects.

179. The Ministers affirmed that States have, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, the sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental and developmental policies, and the responsibility to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to ecosystems of other States or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction. They reaffirmed the importance of the protection of planet Earth and its ecosystems as our common home and that "Mother Earth" is a common expression in a number of countries and regions.

180. The Ministers also reaffirmed that the right of peoples and nations to permanent sovereignty over natural wealth and resources must be exercised in the interest of their national development and of the well-being of the people of the State concerned.

181. While emphasizing the sovereignty of their countries and peoples over their natural wealth, the Ministers are also aware of the duty to respect protect, conserve and sustainably manage and use these resources and ensure the conditions for nature and ecosystems to have the capacity to regenerate, for the benefit of present and future generations. The Ministers also recognized that the sustainable use of natural resources is an effective way to achieve economic growth in harmony with nature while contributing to the eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions and environmental degradation.

182. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of respect for the universal realization of the right of peoples to self-determination, in particular of peoples living under colonial or foreign occupation and other forms of alien domination, which adversely affects their social and economic development, respect for the independence of States,

national sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of States, including through the use of information and communications technologies, in particular social networks, contrary to the principles of international law, for the effective guarantee and observance of human rights, enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and embodied in the international covenants on human rights, and stressed that full respect for the principles and purposes enshrined in the Charter and international law inspire full commitment to multilateralism.

183. The Ministers reaffirmed that the right of self-determination is a primordial right that anchors the United Nations. For developing countries, it has been and continues to be a beacon of hope for all those who struggle under the weight of occupation. In this context, in the implementation and the follow-up and review of 2030 Agenda, the international community must not forget the severe difficulties faced by peoples living under colonial and foreign occupation and strive to remove the obstacles to their full realization of the right of self-determination, which adversely affect their economic and social development and their ability to achieve and implement the sustainable development goals and to ensure that they will not be left behind.

184. The Ministers reaffirmed, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the need to respect the territorial integrity and political independence of States.

185. The Ministers expressed grave concern about the ongoing decline of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. They expressed deep regret about the continued denial of the independence and rights of the Palestinian people and the absence of a political horizon for bringing an end to the fifty-one-year Israeli occupation and achieving the rights of the Palestinian people and the two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions. They stressed the urgency of intensified efforts to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive solution and peace.

186. The Ministers deplored the continuing de-development of the Gaza Strip, in particular as a result of the ongoing Israeli blockade and the lasting and massive negative impact of the brutal military aggression committed by Israel, the occupying Power, in July and August 2014 against the Palestinian civilian population in the occupied Gaza Strip, and expressed grave concern about the dire humanitarian crisis, severe socio-economic conditions and challenges, including widespread poverty and unemployment and water, sanitation and energy crises facing the civilian population. They expressed grave concern about the continuing obstruction of recovery due to the Israeli blockade and the resulting deterioration of infrastructure and services and called for urgent measures to advance reconstruction. The Ministers deplored the systematic, grave breaches of international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law, committed by Israel in this regard. They called for accountability for these crimes and violations and called upon the Security Council, in line with its Charter duty for the maintenance of international peace and security, to undertake serious follow-up efforts to bring an end to Israel's impunity and realize justice for the victims and to contribute to a peaceful and just solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

187. The Ministers reiterated their demand for the immediate and full lifting of the Israeli blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip, which constitutes the massive collective punishment of its inhabitants in grave contravention of international humanitarian and human rights law. The Ministers requested all members of the international community, the United Nations and other international organizations and non-governmental organizations to help to provide the victims of the Israeli aggression in the Gaza Strip with the required humanitarian assistance on an urgent basis. They also reiterated their call upon the international community to continue providing much-needed developmental and humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian

people, among them Palestine refugees, during this critical period, particularly for reconstruction and economic recovery in the Gaza Strip, including through the United Nations agencies present on the ground and providing vital assistance, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

188. The Ministers reiterated their concern in this regard about the deepening financial crisis and recurrent under-funding of UNRWA, exacerbated by the recent termination of funding by one of the Agency's largest donors and the negative effect on Agency programmes to address the humanitarian and developmental needs of the Palestine refugees. They urged States to contribute to UNRWA and to urged their strong support for the continuing efforts to follow-up the Secretary-General's report (A/71/849) and relevant recommendations aimed at mobilizing more sufficient, sustained and predictable funding to the Agency, including by the United Nations, to ensure the Agency's effective operation and uninterrupted provision of vital humanitarian and development assistance to the Palestine refugees, in accordance with its General Assembly mandate, including its education, health, and relief and social services, which have been recognized as promoting 10 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

189. The Ministers expressed their appreciation for the commitment by the Secretary-General to, inter alia, work with Member States, including relevant committees, to ensure that, to the greatest extent possible with the resources vested in the United Nations, the Agency's financial requirements are supported. They appealed to States and organizations for the maintenance of their voluntary contributions to the Agency, as well as an increase in contributions where possible, in particular to the Agency's programme budget, including in consideration of their allocation of resources for international human rights, peace and stability, development and humanitarian efforts, to support the Agency's mandate and its ability to meet the rising needs of the Palestine refugees and essential associated costs of operations.

190. They also appealed to States and organizations not currently contributing to the Agency to urgently consider making voluntary contributions in response to the calls of the Secretary-General for expansion of the Agency's donor base in order to stabilize funding and ensure greater sharing of the financial burden of supporting the Agency's operations, in accordance with the continuing responsibility of the international community as a whole to assist the Palestine refugees, pending a just solution in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

191. The Ministers expressed deep concern about the further decline of the social and economic conditions of the Palestinian people as a result of illegal Israeli practices, which include but are not limited to the continuing colonization of Palestinian land by Israel, the occupying Power, in grave breach of international humanitarian law and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, as well as in flagrant violation of relevant United Nations resolutions, including, inter alia, Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), and disrespect of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. In this connection, the Ministers demanded a halt to Israel's confiscation of Palestinian property, construction and expansion of Israeli settlements and the wall, demolition of Palestinian homes and forced displacement of Palestinian civilians and called for full respect of international law and all relevant resolutions. They also expressed grave concern over the frequent acts of violence, terror and incitement against Palestinian civilians and the destruction of Palestinian properties by Israeli settlers in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and called for action to hold the perpetrators accountable for these crimes.

192. The Ministers reaffirmed their unwavering support for the just cause of Palestine and solidarity with the Palestinian people. They reaffirmed their principled and long-

standing support for the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the achievement of their legitimate national aspirations, including for freedom, independence, justice, peace and dignity in their independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and called for the exertion by the international community of the necessary efforts in support of these objectives.

193. The Ministers reiterated their call for the immediate and full withdrawal of Israel, the occupying Power, from the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967 and from the remaining Lebanese occupied land. They reaffirmed their support for a Middle East peace process aimed at achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 425 (1978), 497 (1981), 1850 (2008) and 2334 (2016) and the principle of land for peace. In this context, they also reaffirmed their support for the Arab Peace Initiative, endorsed by the Arab Summit Conference in March 2002.

194. The Ministers reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and of the population of the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources, including land, water and energy resources, and demanded that Israel, the occupying Power, cease the exploitation, damage, cause of loss or depletion and endangerment of the natural resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan, which constitute violations of international law and severely undermine their ability to pursue sustainable development.

195. Recalling that 16th December 2015 marked the 50th anniversary of the adoption of UN General Assembly resolution 2065 (XX), the first resolution which specifically refers to the Question of the Malvinas Islands, the Ministers reaffirmed the need for the Governments of the Argentine Republic and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to hold negotiations in accordance with the principles and the objectives of the United Nations Charter and the relevant resolutions adopted by the General Assembly, in order to find, as soon as possible, a peaceful solution to the sovereignty dispute relating to "The Question of the Malvinas Islands", and appreciated the good predisposition and willingness of Argentina in holding negotiations related to this aim.

196. In this regard, the Ministers highlighted the right of the Member States of the Group of 77 to permanent sovereignty over their natural resources, based on the principle of territorial integrity (UN General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV)) and international law, and they recalled the importance of not taking measures that could affect the economic growth and sustainable development, nor adopting unilateral actions in the areas under sovereignty dispute between the Argentine Republic and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

197. The Ministers welcomed the Final Agreement between the Government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army as an important step towards a stable and enduring peace in Colombia. The Ministers stressed that an equally determined and exemplary effort will be required to implement the agreements, and in this regard, they called upon the international community to lend its full support to Colombia at this critical stage of the process.

198. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of supporting and strengthening multilateralism, and in this regard recognized that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the other parties is a concrete case of a successful multilateral action for resolving outstanding global issues, stressed that such model sets a real example for further accelerating the achievement of sustainable development including by strengthening international co-operation, through enhanced means of implementation.

199. The Ministers recalled that the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia, was unlawfully excised by the United Kingdom from the territory of Mauritius, prior to independence, in violation of international law and UN General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960 and 2066 (XX) of 16 December 1965 and that all inhabitants of the Chagos Archipelago were forcibly evicted. In this regard, the Ministers took note of the adoption by the UN General Assembly on 22 June 2017 of resolution 71/292 requesting an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965. The Ministers noted that 19 and 6 Members from the Group participated respectively in the first and second rounds of written submissions to the ICJ, while 15 Members took part in the public hearings which were held by the ICJ between 3 and 6 September 2018 in The Hague. The Ministers resolved to continue supporting the completion of the decolonization of Mauritius so that it can affirm its territorial integrity and sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago and to remain seized of the matter.

200. The Ministers also took note of the concern expressed by the Republic of Maldives regarding the legal and technical issues arising from the United Kingdom's illegal decision in 2010 to declare a "marine protected area" in the Chagos Archipelago which overlaps the exclusive economic zone of the Republic of Maldives as declared in its Constitution without prejudice to future resolution of maritime delimitations.

201. The Ministers welcomed the Panmunjom Declaration made at Inter-Korean Summit meetings held on April 27 and May 26, 2018 and the DPRK-US Joint Statement declared at the DPRK-US Summit held in Singapore on June 12, 2018. The Ministers stressed that implementation of the Panmunjom Declaration and the DPRK-US Joint Statement by relevant parties in good faith would contribute to building a lasting and durable peace regime on the Korean Peninsula.

202. The Ministers supported that the positive developments towards peace on the Korean Peninsula is conducive to creating a peaceful environment which is instrumental in achieving the 2030 agenda, including its sustainable development goals and promoting economic prosperity in the Korean Peninsula and countries in the region.

203. The Ministers reaffirmed that the imposition of coercive economic measures, including unilateral sanctions, against developing countries, does not contribute to economic and social development, including dialogue and understanding among countries.

204. The Ministers reaffirmed their firm rejection of the imposition of laws and regulations with extraterritorial impact and all other forms of coercive economic measures including unilateral sanctions, against developing countries and reiterate the urgent need to eliminate them immediately. They emphasized that such actions not only undermine the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and international law but also severely threaten the freedom of trade and investment. The Ministers therefore called upon the international community to adopt urgent and effective measures to eliminate the use of unilateral coercive economic measures against developing countries.

205. The Ministers expressed their strongest rejection of the implementation of unilateral coercive measures and reiterated their solidarity with Cuba. They reaffirmed their call upon the Government of the United States to put an end to the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed on that sisterly nation for almost six decades that constitutes the major impediment for its full development. At the same time, the Ministers regretted the measures implemented by the government of the United States since November 9th, 2017, which strengthen the blockade.

206. The Ministers reaffirmed their rejection to the unilateral economic sanctions imposed on the Sudan, which have a negative impact on the development and prosperity of the people of the Sudan, and in this regard called for an immediate lifting of those sanctions.

207. The Ministers reaffirmed their rejection to the unilateral economic sanctions imposed on the Islamic Republic of Iran, which have a negative impact on the development and prosperity of the people of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and in this regard called for an immediate lifting of those sanctions.

208. The Ministers reaffirmed their rejection to the unilateral economic sanctions imposed on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, which have a negative impact on the development and prosperity of this country, and in this regard emphasized the importance of dialogue and called for an immediate lifting of those sanctions.

209. The Ministers reaffirmed their rejection to the unilateral economic sanctions imposed on the Syrian Arab Republic, which have a negative impact on the development and prosperity of the people of the Syrian Arab Republic, and in this regard called for an immediate lifting of those sanctions.

210. The Ministers reaffirmed their rejection to the unilateral economic sanctions imposed on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which have a negative impact on the development and prosperity of the people of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and in this regard called for an immediate lifting of those sanctions.

211. The Ministers highlighted the progress and challenges experienced since the adoption of the Charter of Algiers and stressed that the Group of 77 and China remain committed to our aspirations, our principles of unity, complementarity, cooperation and solidarity. The Ministers declared their firm pledge to continue their common actions for achieving the sustainable development goals, especially the eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions, inclusively.

212. The Ministers approved the Report of the Thirty-third Meeting of the Committee of Experts of the Perez-Guerrero Trust Fund for South-South Cooperation (PGTF) contained in document G-77/AM(XXX)/2018/2 and endorsed its recommendations. The Ministers commended the Chair of the PGTF for his continued commitment and expressed their satisfaction with the results achieved by the PGTF. In light of the low level of interest earnings of the Fund caused by the current world financial situation as reported by the Chair of the PGTF, the Ministers appealed to every Member State to make a significant contribution to the PGTF on the occasion of the UN Pledging Conference for Development Activities to be held in New York on 5 November 2018.

213. The Ministers approved the Financial Statement of the ECDC Account of the Group of 77 contained in document G-77/AM(XXX)/2018/3, as presented by the Chair of the Group of 77 and urged those Member States that have not yet done so to make special efforts to pay their outstanding contributions.

214. The Ministers warmly welcomed the election by acclamation of the State of Palestine to the Chairmanship of the Group of 77 for 2019. They decided that the Group of 77 would undertake efforts, as deemed necessary and appropriate, to ensure that its Chair is enabled to fully exercise the office and its mandate on behalf of the Member States of the Group of 77 and China.